Summary prepared by David Wilcox who will give the documents to Mr. K. Layton of DOLA on Tuesday 9.5.00

H. AUBREY HALL

Re-appraisements of Pilbara properties in 1920-22

It appears that H Aubrey Hall was employed by A W Canning, Surveyor for the Northern Districts in the Department of Lands and Surveys to carry out pastoral inspections in the coastal Pilbara region lying between Onslow and Whim Creek and its general hinterland in the period 1920-1922. It is almost certain that this commission to inspect the leases was undertaken at the same time as inspections carried out elsewhere by Jim Lyell and others.

The papers are mostly field notes dealing with each of the stations and kept by Mr Hall. There are some copies of correspondence between Hall and Canning and from some others and a number of accounts from local firms for items purchased so that the work could proceed. Copies of Government Form 10s and some wages sheets are included in the papers. It is thought that the original documents would have been forwarded to Mr Canning on the completion of the inspections. Copies of telegrams would support this view.

Mr Hall undertook inspections of 24 stations and not all the information which would have been gathered is in the papers. He also must have looked at Hooley for a map is included. Small holdings, some seven in all were inspected.

There are many points of great interest which arise from a reading of the papers. The first is that the work was carried chiefly by horse-drawn vehicle; a sulky was bought for the purpose and feed was purchased on behalf of the Department along with horse shoes and other farrier needs. At some stage it was decided that a motor vehicle would be more useful and quicker possible for the coastal lands where access was not curtailed by rough ranges. A Mr Wheeler hired the Department his Dodge car and driver and undertook to provide all petrol, tyres and repairs for thirty shillings per day providing that the driver was kept on the stations.

At the time of the inspections there were few improvements on the stations. Most leases had fewer than 30 artificial water supplies which supplemented natural permanent waters in creeks and rivers. There was little fencing. On average about 150-200 miles (240-320 km.) had been erected and on some less had been placed in position. Other improvements were scanty and appeared to be limited to rather rude accommodation and detached kitchens and laundries, mens quarters and shearing sheds (usually more costly that the managers quarters), yards and various outhouses such as stables.

The costs of development derived from the valuations made by Mr Hall ranged from eight to twelve pence per acre, or from four shillings to 15 shillings per sheep area. It can be safely assumed that only the better country would have been improved and that country with a cost of 15 shillings per sheep would have been left for other purposes. Fences were estimated to cost 25 pounds per mile to erect and windmills, variously because of size differences, about 275 pounds including tanks and troughs.

None of the information allowed the costs of production to be calculated.

Each of the stations for which there were records carried large horse plants usually of 100 horses or more. Except on one or two stations cattle were not grazed and were never held in herds of greater than 200. The sheep flock performed poorly. Average lambing percentages were about 40-50 and wool production was between 6 and 7 pounds per head. Sales were not high and not always recorded. Where they were they averaged between five and ten percent of the total flock in good years and none in poor years.

Stocking rates were assessed for each paddock on the station on a four classes basis and they were, as used by Mr Hall, high by current standards. Good grass country was given a carrying capacity of between six and eight acres per sheep, soft spinifex with grass was assessed at about 10 to 12.5 acres per sheep, hard (buck) spinifex with soft spinifex at 15 acres per sheep and buck spinifex at 25 acres per sheep. While the capacity of the poorer country is not so very different to that of today that of the better classes was assessed to be much higher than it would have been today. It should be noted, however, that the advent of buffel grass into the grass communities today will have allowed the stocking rates to be about that which was estimated by Mr Hall for grass communities.

Stations for which good data were provided included:

Peedamulla	Yandeyarra
Portree	Karratha
Sherlock	Mallina
Mardie	Millstream
Hamersley	Woodbrook
Pyramid	Mt Welcome
Yarraloola	Chirritta

Stations with information of variable quality included

Mt Satirist	Coolawanyah
Mundabullangana	Balmoral
Cooya Pooya	Tambrey
Mt Florance	Deepdale
Croydon	Mt Enid

Some of these stations do not exist as stand alone entities today having been amalgamated into other leases

Brief notes are also provided on some small holdings which were undeveloped with the exception of one held by A V Murray who had 2 000 sheep.

There was a map only for Hooley station.

Other papers included the following:

Letters to Hall from various people including Canning
Copies of letters from Hall to others and drafts of letter to Canning
Form 10s, wages forms and various accounts

Maps of most stations showed fences, watering points, some tracks and prominent topographical features. On each map the carrying capacity of each paddock was shown as well as a brief note as to the principal vegetation present. The vegetation classification was extremely simple.

The following table shows essential data for the stations for which almost complete records are available

Station	Area developed, acres	Fences, miles	Waters, No.	Total value of improvem'ts, pounds	Est C C, acres per sheep	Stock Nos.
Peedamulla	500 000	403	34	26469	12.5	27 000
Yandeyarra	250 000	170	13		17	14 000
Portree	200 000	160	23		20	12 500
Karratha	310 000	170	23	12444	9	18 000
Sherlock	228 000	150	23	10476	8.5	20 000
Mallina	307 433	230	30	13227	12	20 000
Mardie	300 000	162	31	16559	10	21 000
Millstream	500 000	310	16	18899	15	25 000
Hamersley	490 000	220	24	18429	10	16 600
Woodbrook	70 000	62	6	4345	10	4 200
Pyramid	372 000	230	29	12870	10	40 000
MtWelcome	81 400	95	16	6305	10	8 000
Yarraloola	250 000	225	28	13209	11	20 000

Data for the remaining stations are incomplete.

It is not known whether this information is available on Land Administration Department files much having been destroyed in an excess of enthusiasm about 25 years ago. It is suggested that the papers should be scanned by the Department and preserved in this way on disc. After this it should be presented to the Battye Library after it has been collated into sections and indexed.